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DE RUEHDBU #0348/01 0681128
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FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9771
INFO RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1961
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1940
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1868
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS 1185
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2041
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2002
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2017
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1921
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC 0145
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 1395

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 000348

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN

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SUBJECT: TAJIK GOVT REACTION TO RUSSIAN MIGRATION LAW (C-RE7-00278)

REF: STATE 022077

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¶1. (U) In a meeting with PolOff March 1, head of the State Social Protection, Employment and Migration Agency Anvar Boboev appeared optimistic that Russia's new migration law would make it easier for Tajik labor migrants to travel to, register, and obtain work permits in Russia. Prior to the government reorganization in December, Boboev headed the State Migration Service, which was then subsumed into the larger agency and folded into the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. Despite the expanded portfolio, migration issues continue to occupy most of Boboev's time.

¶2. (U) Publicly, the government has not expressed concern with Russia's new law, stating that it will make it easier for Tajik labor migrants to easily register and work in Russia. Tajikistan has a visa-free regime with Russia. According to Boboev, the new law means that a Tajik migrant can enter Russia, show an employer his migration card, international passport and a receipt showing that he has paid his labor migration fee and be considered a legal migrant. Critics say that although migrants can register legally, employers may still tend to hire illegal migrants in order to avoid paying social benefit taxes to the government.

¶3. (U) Russia set Tajikistan's migrant quota at 600,000, far below the one million currently believed to be working in Russia. Although the Tajik government publicly acknowledges that between 500,000-600,000 Tajiks are in Russia working as labor migrants, the government has petitioned Russia to increase the quota to 800,000. Boboev explained that the government requested the 200,000 increase to accommodate the seasonal migrants who travel frequently between the countries and for a future overall population increase. He did not know if Russia would approve the increase, but was optimistic, citing Tajikistan's close relationship with Russia. Tajikistan relies heavily on the over \$1 billion in remittances from workers in Russia. The earnings prop up Tajikistan's local consumption boom.

¶4. (U) The bulk of Tajik labor migrants - approximately 46 percent - work as low-skill laborers in construction; 20 percent work in Russia's markets; while the remainder work in health, education, and other sectors. Boboev pointed out that although many Tajik migrants are skilled in technical trades such as auto mechanics, many do not have certificates validating their skills. The Tajik government plans to establish training centers to teach short-term courses and certify technical skills for migrants. These certificates will be valid in Russia as well.

¶5. (U) Boboev cited that Russia deported 17,000 Tajik migrants in 2005, but only 6,100 in 2006. He attributes the drastic decrease to increased migrant awareness and education. Boboev predicts that Russia will deport even fewer migrants this year.

¶6. (U) Although publicly the Tajik government has not expressed concern about Russia's new immigration law, the government is bracing itself for an influx of migrants returning from Russia. According to Boboev, the government aims to create more job opportunities in Tajikistan by improving economic conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises, with a particular emphasis on developing job opportunities for women. Boboev did not explain what steps the government would take to make this happen. Returnees face bleak job prospects in a 20 percent unemployment market, and many local citizens fear an uptick in crime.

¶7. (U) It is still too early to gauge the law's impact, and the general population's response has been muted. Local non-governmental organizations that serve as migrant information centers agree with the government's prognosis that the law will be a positive development and will encourage more migrants to register legally. The centers are ready to educate migrants on the new law and their rights.

¶8. (U) COMMENT: Although the new law may encourage Tajik labor migrants to register legally, it does not address the migration

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problems most Tajiks are concerned about. Tajiks suffer horrible living and working conditions in Russia and cases of extreme and violent racism are not rare. Every year, more than a few migrants return to Tajikistan in body bags. Corrupt ticket consolidators charge migrants triple for Tajik Air tickets to and from Russia. However, at least they have jobs in Russia. If Russia closes its doors, Tajiks will likely pursue openings in other countries. END COMMENT.
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